

# *Green Eggs and Ham vs. Chartreuse Eggs and Pork:* **Winning Online Ad Strategies**



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**N**ewsflash: Google has arrived at Microsoft status. It is the "hate it but must have" for anyone doing business. No matter what you sell -- IT services, software or Tidally Winks -- you are beholden to the search engine behemoth. If you take your paid search and SEO seriously, Google can drive you nuts. Here is a quick primer to help you maintain sanity:

SEO vs. Paid Search: Folks believe that Search Engine Optimization is free and reliable. It is neither. It takes time and money to SEO your site. And it is wholly unreliable, you could be number one this nanosecond and 450 million the next. Plus, you can only sanely SEO a specific page on a one or two search terms. Say you sell green eggs and ham and you choose to SEO on that term. You earn a top 10 organic placement. Hooray! But what about folks who search on chartreuse eggs and pork? Or ova and oink for that matter? What about them? Lost opportunities!

Paid Search is not free either but it is much more reliable. Unlike SEO it allows you to purchase zillions of search terms at auction -- bring on the eggs in any color you choose! The best campaigns feature hundreds of thousands of search terms in tightly organized structures. Developing the spreadsheets demand great English language skills and an overwhelmingly obsessive nature but, when complete, the results are superb. Why so many terms? Just as in stock market investments you must balance your portfolio with expensive often-searched terms and cheap rarely searched terms. This will help keep click costs in check.

The next challenge is getting folks to click on your ads. The secret is specificity. In search ads you must provide prospects with two clicks to gratification -- and the first click is hitting "enter" after the search term has been typed. Why? Google is a complete technological failure: any product that gives you 250,000 answers to one stupid question fails the user. To compensate for this, all of us are typing in longer search terms -- four and five words are becoming the norm. Buying those search terms is a big first step. Writing super specific ads that pick up on those terms and powerful calls to action is the next step. The final step is delivering on the promise: providing a landing page that specifically answers

the search term. In effect, you are delivering what Google cannot: the answer!

The landing page is of unbelievable importance. You must provide enough information to either: A. close the sale (if you are selling a product) or B. get the prospect to pick up the phone and call or send you an email for more info (if you are selling a service). Focusing on the landing page quality often leads to web site re-design and triage -- this process is a critical component to your paid search program's ultimate success and well worth the effort.

There is an even a more important reason to have a great landing page. Google now gives your ad program a quality score and, of course, they keep the scoring parameters top secret. In the old days buying search phrases was relatively simple: write a good specific ad, pay enough money and your ad appeared at the top of the heap. Today, you must achieve a platinum level on the mysterious quality score. There are several known components.

Landing page specificity is very important as well as healthy click-through-rates and a good "history" (though Google gets very vague here). This makes managing paid search advertising complicated; demanding vigilant monthly -- often weekly -- maintenance.

Trending your results means scouring your sales numbers, web stats and Google stats to determine click value, click through rate, conversion trends and more. Do this and you will discover that Google is becoming increasingly expensive and calibrating campaigns is art, science,

experience and instinct rolled into one. Thank you Google, just like Microsoft the more you try to fix yourself, the more miserable you make us!

There is hope! Today other search engines such as Yahoo, MSN and ASK are very viable. Vortals or vertical portals provide great venues for industry-specific advertising. With every element you add to your portfolio you will increase your management time, but the pay back is informed decisions, lower costs and more sales. Steadily you can move away from Google dominance, win new business, create online success and maintain your sanity!

**Buying the proper search terms is a big first step. Writing super specific ads that pick up on those terms and powerful calls to action is the next step. The final step is delivering on the promise: providing a landing page that specifically answers the search term. In effect, you are delivering what Google cannot: the answer!**

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